



State of Connecticut

SENATE

STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

SENATOR MICHAEL A. McLACHLAN
TWENTY-FOURTH SENATE DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
SUITE 3400
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591
CAPITOL: (800) 842-1421
E-MAIL: Michael.McLachlan@cga.ct.gov
WEB SITE: www.SenatorMcLachlan.cga.ct.gov

MINORITY WHIP
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Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am State Senator Michael McLachlan, and I submit this testimony in support of House Bill 6473, *An Act Concerning Persistent Dangerous Felony Offenders*.

This is a strong "three strikes" proposal, that would provide that a person convicted of a third serious, violent felony (non-capitol murder, manslaughter, sexual assault, arson, carjacking, kidnapping, robbery, burglary, stalking in the first degree, felonious assaults, and home invasion) would be sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

This legislation will name "home invasions" as a violent crime which will mandate those convicted of such a crime are considered violent and will in turn stay in jail for longer periods of time.

The concept for this legislation was originally a part of Senate Bill 355, which I introduced. The committee has seen taken the same thoughts and raised them as a committee bill – the language we have before us today.

It has been stated on several occasions that our existing "persistent dangerous felon" law is a "three strikes" law. However, this is not true. Our current law is permissive in that it allows a judge to sentence a violent felon to life in jail, but does not require such a sentence. The current law is faulty and confusing which leads to prosecutors rarely using it. It has been used less than 30 times out of the thousands of times a criminal was eligible.

This law will not lead to an explosion of the prison population. There are currently under 500 persons on the streets of Connecticut with at least two "strikes" under this proposal. With violent crime recidivism rates running anywhere from 30-60% according to studies, it is expected that in the near future only some 200 prisoners will be added to our system. These are already hardened, dangerous criminals who are more than likely going to go back to jail again and again. This is a matter of preventing these criminals from hurting or killing more innocent people.

This law also addresses the state Board of Pardon and Parole. Sections of this law will increase the number (by nearly double) of members assigned to hearing paroles. This expansion is important because more members provided more information, time as well as thins out the workload.

Additionally, there are provisions that require that files are complete three days prior to parole hearing. This file will include sentencing transcripts. This will provide adequate preparation and information before allowing a parole hearing to take place.

Parts of this law also require judges and prosecutors to provide on-the-record rationale for the acceptance of any felony plea deal to be used in the future during the parole process.

Finally, parts of this bill addresses after an offender is released. It will require violent felons released on parole to report to local police departments to be photographed and instructed as to how the police are going to be monitoring them. Also, it will mandate GPS monitoring of all released violent offenders.

I urge the committee to support House Bill 6473 in order to provide better for the general welfare and safety of Connecticut's citizens.

Thank you.